

Q&A_8 - Aug 11, 2023

Q: You recently commented on X about the increasing use of psychedelics and psychedelic research these days. I always thought of psychedelics as being orthogonal to this work, but not really in line with it. What do you see as the role of psychedelics?

A: Psychedelics are useful only for opening and even then only for some people. They carry risks with them and should be used carefully. In the contemporary West there's been a resurgence in enthusiasm for hallucinogens –LSD, DMT, psilocybin, and so on. Under the proper guidance, and with the proper type of person – by which I mean proper temperament – and in the absence of any risk factors, hallucinogenic plants and drugs can be very useful in opening someone up for the first time.

But they quickly lose their shine and you realize that anything you can learn from them, while not always false, probably is not of much significance. Most serious folks leave them behind and move on because these drugs are quite limited. Take DMT for example. It essentially just de-organizes your brain, so what you're seeing is raw noise. How you interpret that depends entirely on you. Some people see machine elves, somebody else sees clouds or a diffuse fractal. But you're not going to get to the Truth that way.

Q: For those who haven't taken them, do these hallucinogens mirror waking up at all?

A: Only in the most superficial of ways. It's more similar to diving into an ocean when you're scuba diving for the first time. All of a sudden the world changes and – gravity is not the same, sound is different, the place is different. It's only a phase shift and you gain your orientation. Another phase shift occurs when you get out of a hot shower and you hit the cold air, bracing you. These are of course poor metaphors, but the point is that it's a phase shift in consciousness. Beyond that, it comes nowhere close to waking up.

Q: Some texts are best recited like the Avatamsaka Sutra. I'm doing an audio-visual recording over the coming months of the Sutra for public learning and enjoyment. What other texts benefit from being consumed in this format?

A: *The Secret of the Golden Flower* comes to mind. *Living and Dying With Grace*. The *Tao Te Ching*, properly translated and properly read – especially with commentary, but only enlightened commentary. The list goes on and there's plenty of work for you or other folks to do if they're inclined. Thomas Cleary's translations are wonderful (he has them for the texts I just mentioned) and I doubt that there's a restriction from the Cleary's estate on recording work, as long as somebody isn't trashing the thing.

There's also some beautiful essays by Doris Lessing that come to mind. *Prisons we Choose to Live Inside* or even her Introduction to Ecclesiastes. There's a long list of great literature that should be preserved for posterity, and we're in danger of losing it. They go out of print all the time.

Q: Could you comment on this passage from Idris Shah's The Sufis:

The so-called problem of communication, which engages so much attention, hinges on assumptions that are unacceptable to the Sufi. The ordinary man says, 'How can I communicate with another man beyond very ordinary things?' The Sufi attitude is that 'communication of things which have to be communicated cannot be prevented.' It is not that a means has to be found. (*The Sufis*, Idries Shah).

A: It is stated perfectly. I let it stand. Increase your need and you'll increase your capacity.

Q: Idries Shah maintains in The Sufis that it's not enough to just read something like a Nasrudin Tale. You're supposed to experience a Nasrudin Tale. Any comments?

A: Absolutely. In the beginning you'll get a chuckle or two. Maybe you'll be somewhat mystified. Eventually you'll be walking along in life and a little cherry bomb goes off in your brain. Then another. You'll see a situation and the teaching function of the joke will hit you at different levels. Then you realize, "Oh, I get it now."

It's a wonderful way to live life because you never know when something hilarious is about to pop out and show you the true nature of these jokes for teaching. I recommend it to everybody, but especially to students of The Way. Good luck the enterprise for two reasons, though. First, good luck trying to convey the tale as elegantly, succinctly, and in as entertaining a manner as the Sufis have. Secondly, good luck conveying them with the proper tact and timing. In psychiatry we used to say, "you're not going to be very popular at a cocktail party if you point out that peoples' unconsciousness is splashing off the walls." So have fun with that. It's a true pleasure to have made the Mulla's acquaintance – a world treasure for everyone that's part of a beautiful, comprehensive development program for the human being.